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Parshat Va'etchanan

Rabbi Eryn London

Class of 2017

Over *Tisha B'Av* we listened to the book of *Eicha*. We read *Kinot*, which poetically told the stories not only about the destruction of the Temples, but also about lives lost during Pogroms, the Holocaust and other great travesties. We sat together mourning the suffering of the world, and spoke about what can each of us do as individuals to try and change the world for the better.

The answer might be found in this week's Parsha, *Parshat Vetchanan*. In *Vetchanan*, we find verse, "*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokenu Hashem Echad*" (Hear O'Israel Hashem is our God, Hashem is one)[Devarim 6:4]. As Ruth Messinger, the president and CEO of the American Jewish World Service wrote:

Parashat Va'etchanan includes the words of the *Sh'ma*... Our sages are explicit that when we recite the *Sh'ma*, we must do so with focus, with clarity, and with unity of heart and mind...The essence of the *Sh'ma*—the imperative to really listen, to pay attention to injustice, and to mend the brokenness in our world—grounds my life with purpose. The difference between hearing and listening is paying attention, finding and living that elusive element of real connection to the "stranger"—or the other.

In these coming weeks moving away from *Tisha B'Av*, and leading up to *Rosh HaShana* may we all be blessed to be able to truly listen in order to mend the brokenness in our world.



Rabbi Eryn London, is a chaplain resident at New York Presbyterian - Weill Cornell Medical Center. She earned her B.A from Goucher College, where she majored in theatre, minoring in psychology and Judaic studies. Eryn subsequently earned an M.A. at Goldsmiths, University of London. She specialized in applied drama: theatre in educational, community, and social contexts. Eryn made aliyah in February of 2010 and studied at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies and at the Susi Bradfield Women's Institute of Halachic Leadership at Midreshet Lindenbaum. She is one of the co-founders of "Gam Yachad", a multi-denominational Beit Midrash for Israeli rabbinical students. Eryn has served as scholar in residence and rabbinic intern at the ACT Jewish Community in Canberra, Australia, Adath Shalom B'nai Israel in Chicago, Illinois, and at the Mt. Freedom Jewish Center in Randolph, New Jersey. In addition, Eryn has lectured in various communities in Israel, Canada, Colombia, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.